

March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Dear Members of the Labor Committee,

My name is Rita Torres and I live in New Haven. I am writing to ask you to pass SB 221.

Every day I drive to a fast food chain in Orange to work for minimum wage. Before I had my daughter in 2011, I drove to Orange to work in a restaurant supply chain where I made more money than I do now. I was a cashier there. It was tough, physical work that demanded a lot of heavy lifting. But it was decent money.

When I got pregnant my doctors told me that I shouldn't be standing for too long, or lifting heavy things, but my manager refused to give me a desk assignment. I kept working as a cashier, but would end up leaving work early every day when I got exhausted. As an hourly worker, the reduced hours cost me. I made only about half of what I normally made in the weeks approaching my due date.

When it came time to give birth, I took 8 weeks off, unpaid. I knew it would be a struggle financially, but I didn't know the half of it. When I tried to return to work, I was told they had filled my position and that they didn't have a job for me anymore. It was hard enough to take eight weeks off unpaid but to be told that I had no job and that I had to start a job search with an infant coming along with me to every place I applied almost broke me down. Because I am not paid as much as I used to be, I now have to live in subsidized housing where I pay a portion of my income. Without that program, I would certainly be homeless.

Paid Family and Medical Leave would have made a huge difference in my life. It would have saved my job and given me income during my maternity leave. I wouldn't have to work forty hours a week for minimum wage and still not be able to make ends meet now. I urge you to establish a Paid Family and Medical Leave program.

Thank you,

Rita Torres  
New Haven